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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: KMDR PREL KPAO OPRC SY

SUBJECT: Issa Codel, Specter, Pelosi's Visit
(4/6-9)

¶11. Summary: Syrian papers on Apr. 6 reported President Asad's meeting on Apr. 5 with Darrell Issa, member of the US House of Representatives. Talks dealt with developments in the region and means and mechanisms to start relations on a correct basis between Syria and the United States. Issa also met with FM Mouallem, who emphasized Syria's commitment to dialogue with the US on all issues and asserted the importance of the recent visits paid by US Congressmen to Damascus for finding solutions to the problems of the region. Issa reiterated the importance of continuing dialogue between Syria and the US, adding that "the latest visits by US Congressmen to Syria constitute a new start for joint action to solve pending issues between the two countries." Issa said his meeting with President Asad was "very constructive." In a press statement at the end of his talks in Damascus, Issa underscored that he joins his voice to the voice of Speaker of the US House of Representative Nancy Pelosi and supports recommendations of the Baker-Hamilton Committee regarding necessity of holding a dialogue with Syria. "At some point we will have a new Ambassador," he said.

Independent al-Watan on Apr. 9 reported that the US Administration is facing new calls for dialogue with Syria, citing an interview with CNN by Republican Senator Arlen Specter on Apr. 8 voicing support for Pelosi's trip to Syria. Mr. Specter said, "We have to deal with President Asad," adding that "Asad can be negotiated with," and that "discussions with Syria are very, very important."

End of summary.

¶12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad meets a new US delegation. New mechanisms to initiate new US-Syrian relations. Member of US House of Representatives, Issa: The meetings were fruitful and dialogue will continue" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/6)

"Syria, after Iraq, becomes a problem between the Congress and the US Administration" (al-Watan, 4/9)

"British Magazine The Economist: Syria overcame pressure through President Asad's intelligence and patience" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/9)

"Moscow: Pelosi visit to Syria was necessary and useful"
(Government-owned Tishreen, 4/7)

"Hungarian Communist Party: Syria is the guarantee of peace and stability of the region" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/7)

"Ki-Moon: Endorsement of the International Tribunal will be through constitutional channels" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/6)

"Hizbollah SecGen Nasrallah: Dialogue has failed; the solution is in seeking the Lebanese people's judgment. The International Tribunal system is based on pre-made judgments. To the governing team: For once, we did not lose" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 4/9)

"Solutions are blocked. Lebanese Parliament Speaker Berri: The problem is the governing team's rejection of the principle of partnership" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/8)

"Lebanese opposition accuses the February 14 team of treason: Sending memo about the International Tribunal to the UNSC is a surrender of sovereignty" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/7)

"Six US soldiers killed in Diyala. Intensive measures on the 4th anniversary of US occupation of Iraq. Confrontations extend in al-Diwaniyah. Iraqi clergyman Moqtada al-Sadr warns against sedition planted by Iraq's enemies" (Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/9)

"Iraqi FM Zebari announces that Ministerial Conference on Iraq will be held in Sharm al-Sheikh at the beginning of May"
(Government-owned Al-Ba'th, 4/8)

"With the approach of the 4th anniversary of Baghdad downfall, a Pentagon report refutes justifications of war" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/7)

"Palestinian security steps as a prelude to forming the National Security Council. The prisoner swap deal awaits Olmert's approval" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/9)

"Palestinian assurances about Shalit. Russia sends Ivanov to Israel and the Palestinian territories: Justifications for siege have ended" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/7)

"One Palestinian martyred in Jabalya. Israel attempts to assassinate Zakaria al-Zobedi, Leader of Al-Aqsa Brigades. Palestinians demand 450 Palestinian captives in return for Shalit" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/8)

"Tehran and Moscow resume Boshahr talks. Iranian President is to announce good news on Iranian nukes" (Government-owned Tishreen, 4/8)

"The Russian Duma Council rejects NATO's advance to the East"
(Government-owned Tishreen, 4/9)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"Focal Syrian Role"

Muhammad Ali Buzah, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (4/6): "The visits to Syria by US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and other American congressmen represent an important turning point in US public policy for the American people, who have begun to feel the grave damage that the official neoconservative policy, which is organically linked to the Zionist project, has caused to the reputation, prestige, and interests of the United States, especially in this part of the world....

"There is no doubt that the diplomacy of dialogue and negotiations with Syria, and listening to Syria's views on the hot files and many issues relevant to the region and the conflict, reflect an

acknowledgement of the importance and centrality of the Syrian role, the impossibility of ignoring or transcending this role, and the futility of the attempts to implement plans or solutions that Damascus does not approve and that do not meet Syria's national and pan-Arab principles of liberating land and regaining rights as the basis of a just and comprehensive peace....

"Events have proved that the logic of diktats and conditions and the language of blackmail, pressure, and siege have failed to force Damascus to change its positions....

"The Bush administration must not forget that Syria has occupied land that must be returned. What is urgently needed today is a change in the policies and conduct of this administration. It should possess, even if for one time only, a will for peace and must force Israel to accept the peace option and its requirements. It should have the courage to admit that it made mistakes and to withdraw and leave the region for its people before asking others to do anything."

"Lying Is an Official Policy for a Superpower"

Isam Dari, chief editor of government-owned Tishreen, commented (4/7): "The US Administration devoted a number of days of its time to monitoring and counting what it saw as fatal mistakes that House Speaker Nancy Pelosi made....

"Leaders of the US Administration, therefore, rushed to confront Pelosi's decision in advance. They tried to prevent the visit

before it took place, perhaps for fear that the American official would find facts that the neoconservative team was hiding from the American public and Congress, facts that would only aggravate the scandal of this team....

"And when they failed to prevent the visit despite all the pressure they applied, they wanted to provide Pelosi and her large delegation with false 'documents' validating their anti-Syria positions and policies and proving that Syria is a troublemaker in the Middle East, killing Americans in Iraq with terrorists it allows to cross the border....

"The US Administration was shocked that those 'documents' were unconvincing to Pelosi and most of her delegation members. The shock was even more powerful when Pelosi announced from Damascus that Syria indeed wants peace....

"Pelosi must have lied and said that Syria does not want peace, contrary to the positions she heard and ascertained in Syria.

"She should have adhered to the 'political doctrine' of the Bush administration, which says: 'keep lying until the others believe you....'

"Had Pelosi done that, she would have won the blessings of Bush, the leaders of his administration, and the gang of neoconservatives that draws up American policies, and which we nominate for the Oscar for lying, deception, trickery, and the assassination of private and public freedoms and democracy.

"What is the matter with this 'clique' that rules the United States and controls the world and humanity? While it brags about freedom and democracy and launches destructive wars against nations under the pretext of promoting democracy, it wants to muzzle anyone who speaks the truth, even if the speaker is the head of the US House of Representatives....

"The Bush administration has indeed proven to us that it is shameless. And those who have no shame can do anything in broad daylight. They try to twist facts, forge history, lie to the Americans and the world, and establish courts of inquisition to try even the highest ranking American officials if they dare to break the will of the neoconservatives, the merchants of wars and

destruction and the enemies of rights, justice, and peace.

"We know that Mrs. Pelosi is fully able to defend herself and her positions and convictions. But we fear for her from the arrows of the White House and the State Department, and from new lies they might fabricate about her. At the same time, we fear that the truth might be lost, since lying has become an official policy of a superpower....

"What is assuring, however, is that the representatives of the American people are today more aware of the facts and of the disasters that the Bush administration brings upon the US, Americans, and the rest of the world."

"Before It Is too Late for Apology"

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishrin, commented (4/8): "The American people are impatiently awaiting the departure of the current US Administration and the arrival of one more concerned about the interests, stature, and international reputation of the United States....

"Seventy-two percent of Americans said in the latest opinion poll that they are not satisfied with the performance of the Bush administration....

"The war on Iraq was the main reason behind this position by the American people. Yet the Bush administration does not want to accept these facts. It insists on swimming against the current. It

goes too far in provoking and deceiving Americans by forging facts about the war on Iraq and about foreign policy. It does not want to learn from previous experiences and announce its mistakes publicly and apologize to the Americans and the Iraqis for them before it is too late...."

Corbin